

The Office of the Taxpayer Advocate acknowledges that there are several factors that drive low-income taxpayers to pay for tax preparation, including: (1) Inconvenient location or hours of Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites for low-income taxpayers; (2) lack of bank accounts for quicker direct deposit of refunds; (3) need or desire for immediate cash; and (4) inability to prepare one's own taxes due to limited language, literacy, or computer skills.

The VITA program can be a great resource to low-income taxpayers, providing assistance that will help them avoid unscrupulous commercial tax-preparers that profit unduly from RALs. VITA is available to taxpayers earning less than \$36,000 a year. In 2004, only 1.8 million returns were filed using VITA assistance, although 21 million taxpayers claimed the EITC that year. VITA can better help taxpayers get the full refund from EITC they have earned. In the city of Los Angeles alone, EITC returned over \$585 million in 2003. Mr. Speaker, VITA is vital to the economic health of our hardest-working communities and should be promoted as a means of avoiding the use of RALs by low-income taxpayers.

This bill takes a two-pronged approach aimed at curtailing the drain on our low-income taxpayers by first regulating income tax preparers and refund anticipation loan providers and, secondly, creating IRS-administered grant programs to provide free tax preparation for low-income taxpayers such as provided by VITA clinics and to help individuals establish a bank account for the first time.

I encourage all of my colleagues to support this legislation.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR HAITI ACT OF 2005

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 17, 2005

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the New Partnership for Haiti Act of 2005, which will help Haitians overcome the many social, economic, and physical challenges currently facing the country.

Today in Haiti less than 45 percent of Haitians have access to safe water and access to sanitation. Seventy-six percent of Haiti's children under the age of five are underweight, or suffer from stunted growth and 63 percent of Haitians are undernourished. Eighty percent of the population lives in abject poverty and the unemployment rate is estimated to be nearly 90 percent.

My long standing interest in ending the AIDS pandemic has brought focus on Haiti, with 90 percent of all HIV/AIDS cases in the Caribbean. As we combat global HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, maternal and child mortality, and many other life threatening diseases, we must address the long-term effect of dilapidated physical and health infrastructure and abject poverty throughout the world, including in Haiti.

My bill, the New Partnership for Haiti Act of 2005 offers a comprehensive plan for future engagement between the U.S. and Haitian

Government. This legislation partners Haitians and Americans together to execute an environmentally sound approach to rebuilding Haiti. Its major provisions are aimed at developing basic sanitation, water, and other health infrastructures in Haiti.

The New Partnership for Haiti Act would bring the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers to train and educate Haitians on how to rebuild, pave, and maintain roads to provide access to rural and urban areas to health clinics. It will commission environmental impact studies for these projects, focusing on long term, environmentally sound solutions—not short term remedies.

Haiti needs assistance in addressing its long-term health infrastructure development. The most basic of these needed development challenges is water. How can Haiti begin to combat its enormous health problems without basic clean and safe water?

Haiti's water quality is life-threatening. In a study released in May of 2003, Haiti ranked last in the world for water quality. The New Partnership for Haiti Act will provide funds and expertise through USAID to partner with Haiti on rebuilding of sanitation, water purification projects, and education for Haitians on how to maintain these systems themselves in the future. This bill will help Haitians build and maintain safer, quality sewage systems and safe water delivery for both urban and rural communities.

The New Partnership for Haiti Act will start a pilot program for American Health Professionals and also Engineers who are interested in going to Haiti and helping with the development process.

It is my hope that a transfer of knowledge from U.S. professionals in the fields of health and engineering to Haitians will ensure long term development and guarantee the success of the programs similar to the success of the Global Fund and other international initiatives. By widening the knowledge base of non-governmental organizations and professionals in Haiti, the U.S. will take advantage of a unique opportunity and obligation towards Haiti's future.

We worked together to get the humanitarian loans, which had been held up by the Inter-American Development Bank officially released on May 9, 2003. It is my hope that we can continue to push for the full release of these loans and the potential for future humanitarian grants through the IDB. I also believe we must move forward on establishing a health infrastructure for efficient delivery of these health and social sector funds.

Today I submit this legislation, and thank all of my original cosponsors.

I look forward to the support of my colleagues and the Administration.

BLACK HISTORY TRIBUTE TO MARY ELIZABETH PIPPINS GATES

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 17, 2005

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, throughout the month of February, I would

like to recognize outstanding African Americans of the 2nd Congressional District of Mississippi, and their contribution to Black History. The 23 counties of the 2nd District are well represented from both a local and national perspective.

Americans have recognized black history annually since 1926, first as "Negro History Week" and later as "Black History Month." In fact, black history had barely begun to be studied—or even documented—when the tradition originated. Although blacks have been in America as far back as colonial times, it was not until the 20th century that they gained a presence in our history books.

Though scarcely documented in history books, if at all, the crucial role African Americans have played in the development of our nation must not be overlooked.

I would like to recognize Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Pippins Gates, of Leake County, Mississippi. Mrs. Gates is a graduate of Baldwin High School and received her high school diploma at the age of 15. Ms. Gates continued her education and entered Mississippi Industrial College in Holly Springs, MS where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education. Mrs. Gates later received Master's degrees in Library Science from Delta State University, Cleveland, MS and in School Administration from Jackson State University, Jackson, MS. In addition, she has done additional study at Mississippi State University and at the University of Southern University.

Mrs. Gates began her teaching career at Conway Attendance Center in Conway, Mississippi. She also served as an elementary teacher at South Leake Attendance Center in Walnut Grove, MS. Mrs. Gates served as President of the Bolivar County Teachers Association and the Leake County Association of Educators. She served as full-time state president of the Mississippi Association of Educators in 1982–1983. She was appointed by Governor William Winter to serve on the first Commission on Teacher and Administrator Education, Certification, and Development. She served as chairperson of the Board of Directors of the East Central Community Action Agency for eight years. Mrs. Gates retired from the Leake County School district after 40 years of dedicated service to education.

Mrs. Gates served as First Vice-President of the Leake County Branch NAACP for twenty years and is presently serving her 4th year as President. She is a member of the Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church and is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. She is currently serving as a member of the Thomastown Attendance Center Improvement Committee.

Mrs. Gates has received numerous awards for distinguished service to public education and civil rights which have included Outstanding Achievement in Education presented by the Leake County Branch NAACP, Outstanding Achievement in Human Relations from the Mississippi Association of Educators, Exemplary Service in the Promotion of Literacy from the International Reading Association and Distinguished and Dedicated Service as President of the Mississippi Association of Educators.

I take great pride in recognizing and paying tribute to this outstanding African American of

the 2nd Congressional District of Mississippi who deserves mention, not only in the month of February but year round.

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE DAY
OF REMEMBRANCE: INTRODU-
CTION OF THE WARTIME PARITY
AND JUSTICE ACT OF 2005

HON. XAVIER BECERRA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 17, 2005

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of my constituents to commemorate the Day of Remembrance. As we know, on February 19, 1942, then President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 that led to the internment of 120,000 Americans of Japanese descent. With the stroke of a pen, innocent men, women, and children became prisoners and were branded disloyal to the nation they called home. Lives were disrupted and homes were broken as these Americans were uprooted from their communities and locked behind barbed wire fences.

The force of wartime hysteria darkened the light of justice and reasonable people suddenly embarked on an unreasonable course. Indeed, America was engaged in a monumental struggle as our soldiers engaged the enemy in the European and Pacific theatres. Here in the United States, many citizens had faces that looked like that of the enemy. Without any evidence, fear was mounting, and the patriotism of these Japanese Americans was questioned. Some worried that they were intent on doing harm against the very flag they saluted. Decades later, history vindicated these loyal Americans as not even a single documented case of sabotage or espionage was committed by an American of Japanese ancestry during that time.

What our nation found through the disinfectant of time was what those who endured internment knew all along. Surrounded by armed guards behind a prison fence, mothers thought of their sons who fought for the freedom of the nation that denied them of their own liberty. Indeed today the annals of military history show that the Japanese American soldiers of the 442nd and combat regiment fought honorably and bravely for ideals they knew our nation had not yet afforded to their own families back home. Still, they were worth fighting for. And this regiment would become the most decorated group of soldiers in American history as they proved their devotion to our nation fighting in both the European and Pacific theatres. It took more than 50 years, but finally in 2000, President Bill Clinton awarded 22 of these heroes with the Medal of Honor.

In 1983, a Presidential Commission concluded that the internment was the result of both racism and wartime hysteria. Five years later, then President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act into law that provided an official apology and redress to most of those confined in U.S. internment camps during World War II. This was the culmination of half a century of struggle to bring justice to those to whom it was denied. I am proud that our

nation did the right thing. But seventeen years after the passage of the CLA, we still have unfinished work to be done to rectify and close this regrettable chapter in our nation's history.

That is why I am re-introducing legislation to finish the remaining work of redress. While most Americans are aware of the internment of Japanese Americans, few know about our government's activities in other countries resulting from prejudice held against people of Japanese ancestry. Recorded thoroughly in government files, the U.S. government involved itself in the expulsion and internment of an estimated 2,000 people of Japanese descent who lived in various Latin American countries. Uprooted from their homes and forced into the United States, these civilians were robbed of their freedom as they were kidnapped from nations not even directly involved in World War II. These individuals are still waiting for equitable redress, and justice cries out for them to receive it. That is why today I will introduce the Wartime Parity and Justice Act of 2005 to finally turn the last page in this chapter of our nation's history.

This bill provides redress to every Japanese Latin American individual forcibly removed and interned in the United States. These people paid a tremendous price during one of our nation's most trying times. Indeed, America accomplished much during that great struggle. As we celebrate our great achievements as a nation, let us also recognize our errors and join together as a nation to correct those mistakes. My legislation is the right thing to do to affirm our commitment to democracy and the rule of law.

In addition, the Wartime Parity and Justice Act of 2005 provides relief to Japanese Americans confined in this country but who never received redress under the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 given technicalities in the original law. Our laws must always establish justice. They should never deny it. That is why these provisions ensure that every American who suffered the same injustices will receive the same justice. Finally, my legislation will reauthorize the educational mandate in the 1988 Act which was never fulfilled. This will etch this chapter of our nation's history into our national conscience for generations to come as a reminder never to repeat it again.

At the forefront of this continuous fight for justice, there are Members of Congress and individuals of the community. This Saturday, I will have the privilege of joining with citizens in Los Angeles at the Japanese American National Museum to commemorate the Day of Remembrance. In addition, on April 8th and 9th of this year, there will be a public testimonial event called "The Assembly on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians" at Hastings College of Law in San Francisco, California. At this historic event, former internees of Japanese descent as well as those of Italian and German ancestry will testify about their experiences under oath. This testimonial event will provide historical information, personal testimonies and community opinions to the public and Members of Congress. Campaign For Justice has been a leading driving force behind this event with Japanese American Citizens League, which has reaffirmed its support for the ongoing redress efforts.

Mr. Speaker, let us renew our resolve to build a better future for our community as we

dedicate ourselves to remembering how we compromised liberty in the past. Doing so will help us to guard it more closely in the future. As we commemorate the Day of Remembrance, I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass the Wartime Parity and Justice Act of 2005.

HONORING THE CENTENNIAL AN-
NIVERSARY OF ROTARY INTER-
NATIONAL

HON. GREG WALDEN

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 17, 2005

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the extraordinary commitment to service, community, and humanitarianism displayed by the members of Rotary International as the organization celebrates its 100th anniversary this month.

One hundred years ago, a lawyer in Chicago, Illinois, embarked on an effort to create a professional club that captured the same friendly spirit he felt in the small towns of his youth; a club that would make service a priority, generosity a regular occurrence, and hard work a way of life. This idea was welcomed throughout the United States with clubs sprouting coast to coast within the first decade, and throughout the rest of the world with clubs forming on six continents by 1921.

Today, Rotary International is a worldwide organization of business and professional leaders—individuals committed to humanitarianism, high ethical standards, and civic involvement.

I have been a proud member of Rotary since October 1987, and while my work here in Washington, DC, keeps me from attending all the meetings of my Hood River, Oregon club, I make every attempt to go when I am home. And as I commute home to Oregon each week from our nation's capital, I am able to attend many meetings at clubs in the twenty counties throughout my sprawling district.

There are approximately 1.2 million Rotarians in over 31,000 clubs located in 166 countries. And in the United States, there are nearly 400,000 Rotarians in more than 7,500 clubs.

Rotary International has the motto "Service Above Self" and they adhere to "The Four Way Test" of business ethics, a philosophy that encourages truth, fairness, goodwill and mutual benefit in all professional actions. These traits are evident in the projects that Rotary clubs through Oregon's Second District, the United States and the world have supported over the years: eradication of polio, tsunami and hurricane relief, aid to famine victims in Zimbabwe, international youth exchange, training for teachers of students with disabilities, humanitarian and educational grants, vocational service and local community projects such as building playgrounds and developing parks. These are just a few examples of the depth in service given by Rotarians around the world.

A major focus of Rotary International is the global eradication of polio, a goal that the organization hopes to meet this year. In 1985,